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VETERAN'S READJUSTMENT PROGRAM (VRP) AND NON-VRP
COMPARISON FOR RECRUITMENT OF WHITE FEMALES AT
THE U.S. ARMY MISSILE COMMAND, FY 85 - FY 89

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Redstone Arsenal, Alabama 35898-5000

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Veteran's Preference Act (VPA) of 1944, passed by the United States (U.S.) Congress, occurred at a time when a small percentage of women within the U.S. sought full time or career employment outside the home. Changes, such as the almost total shift of population from rural to urban in the U.S., plus other economic, social, demographic, and political issues, have caused continuing concern to be raised as to the advisability and appropriateness of veteran's preference in employment decisions.

While the practice of granting veteran preference was legalized and given a more formal structure in 1944, the granting of some form of preferential hiring treatment had been utilized from the time of the Revolutionary War. The idea of granting veterans certain privileges not awarded the rest of society was, for the most part, readily accepted. The passage of the VPA caused a complete change in the way the Federal Government conducted its personnel management program and would, in turn, effect many other personnel program procedures in both local and state governments.

II. BACKGROUND

The Federal Government is an employer of over 2.3 million full-time civilians. Each year the Federal personnel system processes more than 200,000 new appointments and 2 million other personnel actions. The Federal Government, being the nation's largest employer, exerts a tremendous influence over the course of personnel administration within the entire country.

Various groups within American society, since the 1960's, have begun to question whether or not veteran's preference is proper and justifiable in terms of sound personnel management. Regardless of the questioning and the fact that there was a deep division within the country over the Vietnam conflict, veteran's groups and supporters have lobbied for special legislation for veterans of the Vietnam conflict.

High unemployment rates and problems of adjusting to civilian life affected many Vietnam veterans in the middle and late 1960's. Executive Order 11397, February 1968, was issued in response to these problems by allowing Vietnam-era Veterans (VEV's) to be considered outside the normal Civil Service Commission recruitment procedures for Federal positions. While this legislation was hailed by veteran's groups, other groups were not pleased. Debate over the Civil Service Reform Act during President Carter's administration revealed that some groups wanted to cut back the hiring preference granted under the VPA of 1944 and also, the retention or reduction in force protection provided to veterans. It is considered as a sign of the strength of various veteran's groups within the country that the final version of the Civil Service Reform Act granted additional consideration to veterans in both hiring and retention procedures.

III. DISCUSSION

A. U.S. Army Missile Command

The U.S. Army Missile Command is responsible for the total life cycle management of all Army missile systems. Total life cycle management includes research, development, testing, procurement, production management, quality assurance, supply, materiel maintenance management, and foreign military sales. There are more than 7,000 civilian and approximately 1,000 military employees assigned to this command.

According to Blau and Scott [1], individuals live in organizations and, as a result, are greatly influenced by these organizations. These organizations may be as simple as the family or as complex as an organization structured to explore outerspace. The U.S. Army Missile Command falls into the extremely technical and complex end of the spectrum for organization classification.

In organizations, personnel costs are one of the primary drivers for total expenditure of money. While most organizations have equipment and buildings, the recruitment, training, retention, and proper utilization of employees often takes the greater part of a budget. How well an organization manages the work force often predicts its success or failure.

The fact that the U.S. Army Missile Command depends on both military and civilian employees makes it unlike other organizations outside the Department of Defense. Civilian and military employees are regulated by separate authority but must work together to accomplish the overall mission.

B. Federal Sector Personnel Management and Equal Employment Opportunity

Discussion of this topic is found in Technical Report CPO-86-2, dated February 1986.

C. Veteran's Readjustment Appointments

There is a general consensus of opinion by varied individuals and groups that VEV's have been affected by problems of employment and adjustment to civilian life. Some of these problems have been articulated by veterans and veteran's groups while others have been carefully studied and analyzed by scholars and researchers in the helping professions. Veteran's organizations and other interested groups began to lobby Congress and the Executive Branch of Government to grant special consideration for VEV's. Even though veterans already enjoyed special hiring consideration for Federal positions under the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, groups began to lobby for even more special consideration. As a result of pressures by various groups and the fact that VEV's were suffering from high unemployment rates, the Federal Government began to grant special consideration for employment in Federal positions.

A special authority granting Federal agencies the right to employ noncompetitively certain VEV's was established in 1968 by Executive Order 11394. The Transitional Appointment Authority enabled each agency to direct-hire VEV's who had completed not more than 1 year of education above the high school level into jobs at grades General Schedule (GS) 5 or Wage Grade (WG) 5

or below, if appointed within 1 year of military separation. The veteran was required to complete a formal educational program within a period of from 1 to 8 years and was converted to Career or Career-Conditional status upon completion. The educational program was restricted to institutional training, and the veteran was not eligible for position change.

On 26 March 1970, Executive Order 11521 replaced the Transitional Appointment with the Veteran's Readjustment Appointment (VRA) which had several advantages over the former. Eligibility was expanded to include those who had completed not more than 2 years of education above the high school level; the time before conversion was set at a flat 2 years; the training program was changed to extend for not less than 1 year and may include planned on-the-job training, classroom training, or a combination of the two; and the appointees became eligible for noncompetitive movement by reassignment, transfer, or promotion.

On 3 December 1974, Public Law 93-508, the Vietnam Era Veteran's Readjustment Assistance Act became law. Section 403 of that Act incorporated, by reference, the Veteran's Readjustment Appointment Authority with one change. Where previously the veteran was only eligible for a VRA appointment for a period of 1 year from separation (or release from hospitalization or treatment immediately following separation from the Armed Forces), that period was extended by the length of time a veteran is continuously enrolled in a program of education on more than a half-time basis, with an additional provision that at least 6 months of eligibility remains when the veteran leaves the program.

On 26 October 1978, Public Law (PL) 95-520 was signed into law liberalizing the Veteran's Readjustment Program (VRP) to provide improved Federal employment opportunities for VEV's. Under the provisions of this revised program, Federal personnel offices were required to establish an inventory of eligible veterans. The eligibility level of employment was raised from WG-5 and GS-5 to WG-7 and GS-7. The educational limit on compensable disabled veterans was removed.

A continuing need to provide employment opportunities for Vietnam veterans has resulted in the Federal Government continuing and expanding this recruitment authority. Public Law 98-543 entitled "Veteran Benefits," enacted on 24 October 1984, continued the program and raised the employment eligibility level to the WG-9 and the GS-9 level.

Recruitment procedures for Vietnam veterans are relatively simple. Each Federal agency, including the U.S. Army Missile Command, maintains their own inventory of applicants and are not required to request a list of eligibles from the Office of Personnel Management.

At the U.S. Army Missile Command, VEV's file applications directly and are rated for up to five positions of their preference. Federal managers can either utilize traditional Office of Personnel Management procedures to recruit for positions grades 1 through 9 or they can utilize the VRP. If a manager decides to utilize traditional Office of Personnel Management procedures, he/she is restricted to selecting from the top three applicants and cannot pass over or fail to select a veteran to select a non-veteran.

As described above, the special authority known as the VRP greatly expanded opportunities for VEV's in the area of Federal employment opportunities. The Veteran's Preference Law of 1944 had granted honorably discharged veterans additional advantages in competing for Federal jobs with other applicants. The VRP provided an avenue for Government employment outside the normal recruitment avenues. Groups long opposed to veteran's preference in hiring viewed this new program as another form of discrimination against females.

VI. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to provide followup and additional longitudinal data to determine whether or not the VRP at the U.S. Army Missile Command presented a serious barrier to employment opportunities for white females. Effects on black females were not studied because black females and black males are considered together under existing Federal Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action programs.

The population considered in this study included all of the people hired from outside Government service into the U.S. Army Missile Command, grades 1 through 9, from fiscal year 85 through fiscal year 89. Pay grades 1 through 9 are the grades to which VEV's are eligible for appointment through the VRP. The principle pay system in the Federal service is divided into 18 grades or levels with grade 1 representing the lower level (i.e., routine repetitive duties) and grade 18 the upper level (i.e., high level managerial positions). Grades 1 through 9 typically represent clerical, and entry level professional/administrative positions. Total hires by race, sex, and veteran's status for traditional Office of Personnel Management recruitment procedures as well as total hires by race, sex, veteran's status, through the VRP, were considered. The use of the total population recruited through these two programs eliminated the need for inferring results from statistical sampling methods used in most research studies of this nature. Arvey [2] suggests results obtained through typical statistical sample sizes of the larger population may be inadequate for indicating actual changes. Utilization of the total population from both recruitment sources provided a direct comparison of percentages of white females recruited through both programs. This study considered a difference of 5 percent from one program to another as significant.

Recruitment data for FY 85 through FY 89 for the VRP was compared against all other recruitment data for the same time frame for appointments grades 1 through 9 from outside the Government. Mean percentages were developed by year from each program, and a comparison was made to determine if there was a 5 percent difference in the percentage of recruitment by categories, by programs. A mean percentage of all 5 fiscal years was developed to provide an overall comparison.

The table compares the percentages of white females recruited to the U.S. Army Missile Command through the VRP to the percentages of white females recruited through all other procedures for the period FY 85 through FY 89. As depicted in this table, over 5 percent more white females were recruited through all other recruitment procedures than through the VRP in each of the 5 years studied. The composite mean percentage for all other recruitment procedures is 55.8 percent for white females as compared to only 6.1 percent for the VRP.

TABLE. Comparison of White Women Recruited Via the VRP and Non-VRP Program,
FY 85 - FY 89.
(U.S. Army Missile Command Appointments)

Fiscal Years	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
VRP (N = 112)					
Total recruits	5.0	51.0	32.0	8.0	16.0
Percentage of total	0.9	11.5	5.4	4.4	3.1
Total white female recruits	0	3.0	2.0	0	3.0
Percentage of total	0	5.5	6.3	0	18.8
Composites for 1985-89					
Mean percentage	5.1				
Non-VRP (N = 2,144)					
Total recruits	523.0	393.0	558.0	172.0	498.0
Percentage of total	99.1	88.5	94.6	95.6	96.9
Total white female recruits	276.0	209.0	299.0	106.0	288.0
Percentage of total	52.8	53.2	53.6	61.7	57.8
Composites for 1985-89					
Mean percentage	55.8				
Note: Recruitment figures represent total population recruited and are not subsets of larger populations.					

V. CONCLUSION

During the five-year period under study, the percentage of white women recruited under the VRP did not equal even one-eighth of the percentage recruited through all other recruitment procedures. While there has been a slight narrowing of the difference from the 1986 study of recruitment, years 1970 through 1984 (mean percentage of white women recruited through VRP = 5.6 percent, as compared to 60.3 percent for all other recruitment procedures) the VRP, without question, presents a barrier to the recruitment of white women.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have implications in several areas. First, the VRP has continued to provide recruitment help to VEV's. While studies indicate that the older veterans (35 and above) have made employment adjustments and have reached a parity with their non-veteran counterparts, younger veterans (age 30 to 34) continue to be unemployed at a higher rate than their non-veteran counterparts. The question must be raised, since the war was over a decade and a half ago how much longer should special provisions be made in employment opportunities?

Other special interest groups, such as the handicapped, are advocating and gaining stronger provisions for employment opportunities. As each special group is afforded additional considerations from the general population, the process of personnel administration becomes more complex and presents more opportunities for adverse relationships to develop. Both recruitment officials and all levels of management must be given advice and in-depth training in all of the special recruitment programs that are in place. Care must be taken to insure that no group's rights are violated and that every person receives the consideration to which they are entitled. Personnel management will most likely continue to be more complex as we move into the 1990's.

Finally, Human Resource Officers need to allocate resources to insure that proper statistical studies are conducted on all personnel recruitment programs. Failure to conduct periodic assessment of programs may place organizations in an untenable position in case of lawsuits. It is recommended that results of studies that are made be shared with the organizations through publications and/or presentations.

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2. Arvey, R. D.; Cole, D. A.; Hazucha, J. F. and Hartanto, F. M. Statistical Power of Training Evaluation Designs. Personnel Psychology. Vol. 38, Number 3, Autumn 1985, pp 493 - 507.

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